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**Rep. Mahon
To Ride Herd
On Big Budget**BY CAROL FOLEY
Chronicle Washington Bureau

Washington — Lanky, easy-going Rep. George Mahon moved into the highest committee post in Congress with the same West Texas stride that paced his 30 years on Capitol Hill.

With the sudden death of Rep. Clarence Cannon (D., Mo.), the 63-year-old Democrat from Lubbock became chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

This post gives him the awesome responsibility of presiding over the government's nearly \$100 billion annual budget.

Mahon comes to his new task well-equipped, having served 12 years as chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee.

Handled \$500 Billion

In that post Mahon has handled some \$500 billion in defense spending.

The soft-spoken, unassuming West Texan commands wide respect with his quiet manner and hard work.

One colleague observed: "There are two types of congressman—workhorses and show horses. George is a workhorse."

Born in Louisiana, Mahon moved to West Texas as a small child. He was reared on a cotton farm in Mitchell County.

One acquaintance of Mahon during his high school years recalls: "George Mahon was always respected because he spoke so well. But he spoke only when he had something important to say and then everyone listened."

Was District Attorney

After he was graduated from Loraine High School, Mahon went to Simmons University in Abilene for his bachelor's degree.

Finishing the University of Texas law school in 1925, Mahon returned to Mitchell County and won election as county attorney the following year.

Mahon was appointed district attorney for the 32d judicial district in 1927 and won election to that post in 1928, holding it until 1934 when he was elected to Congress.

Mahon is the only congressman his 19th district has had.

Former Vice-President and Speaker of the House John Nance Garner once (in the '40s) said of Mahon: "He's the best man we've elected in Texas in the past 25 years."

He has a moderately conservative voting record, like most of his fellow Texans here.

Between coping with mail from constituents and his committee work, Mahon's day often starts before sunrise and continues beyond the sunset.

His big assignment came in 1949, when Cannon named him chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee. Except for four years when the Republicans were in the majority, Mahon has kept this post.

A tough-minded overseer, Mahon tackled his job with integrity and deliberation. His thoughtful work and keen sense of responsibility brought him prestige in the Pentagon and in Congress.

While defense spending always is a good debate topic, Mahon manages to get strong bipartisan support when he brings military appropriations bills to the House floor.

From the outset Mahon recognized the need for "tightening up" the U.S. defense system. But it wasn't until the Russians put up Sputnik I, that his point of view was appreciated. Since then much greater attention has been devoted to maximum military efficiency. And Mahon has indicated his enthusiasm for money-saving, efficiency-producing reforms introduced by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara.

Because of his post, Mahon is one of the few members of Congress aware of the operation and cost of the Central Intelligence Agency.

But true to his quiet, behind-the-scenes approach, Mahon refuses to give much hint of his attitude on the agency's secretive programs:

"There are several of us who work with the agency. We know what it is doing. We work to see that the programs are good. Most of the critics of the CIA simply have no idea about what it is doing. They do themselves and the country an injustice by talking."

Comments like this have led a few to claim Mahon is willing to accept without question what the military or the CIA say.

But the years show Mahon has been instrumental in helping curtail the club-like qualities of the army, which were strongest before World War II, but lingered on afterward.

During his 15 years of close association with military matters, Mahon has become recognized as a top authority on U.S. defense systems.

But he himself never served and an enthusiastic tryman singer. For a number of years in the armed forces. He was too here he taught a men's Sunday young for World War I and school class. too old for World War II.

As this West Texan, with his deceptively boyish face, takes his wife, Helen, lead a quiet over the House Appropriations life. Neither of them drinks or Committee, he will have quite smokes, and they have avoided a different manner than the the active Washington social, cantankerous Mr. Cannon.

Mahon doesn't like to fight game with Texas friends, or and skirts squabbles. But in his Texas state society gatherings easy way, he wins most of his Mahon grew up a Methodist stands.

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